

My Father, The Bartender

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My Father, The Bartender

Olivia Mirmohamed

A refugee walks into a bar.
what he orders doesn't matter.
He will have a couple of them.
The bartender will find him good,
but quiet company.

The refugee says,
He used to be a bartender himself.
So it is important.
But it's always Corona.
And it's always a few.
He's comfortable enough

now to show his teeth
while he laughs, and they are
nice teeth, despite the fact
that he's a smoker. He lights
a marlboro and he's comfortable

enough to open his hands
when he talks now and he'll
sculpt you the same montage
that is dancing in his bloodlit
eyes. And the bartender decides,

he likes him now and asks
him where his home is and before
the Corona's, before the bartender
was comfortable enough to pay
attention to the pale side of my
father's hands, the refugee would
have said,

“Down the street.”

But now, that he’s had a few,
he will say,
 “Africa.”
with a fierceness that will startle
the bartender but make him love
my father more because he’s realized
not dancing but swimming
in my fathers eyes, are oceans,
millions of them and deep.
My father, has this
effect on people.

Bottled charisma, a vesseled Odyssey,
my father is a book everyone
in the room wants to read.
The bartender, will buy
him a drink and ask for his
stories of Africa and my father

knows now that he is worthy
of this man, whose job he has
already had, he is worthy of his
ears. At the end of the night

my father will go down
the street. He will call me,
I will hear ice cubes clinking
as he talks while smiling.
He will repeat himself.
He will ask me how
to pronounce this word
or that and I will
repeat it back to him

and when it is time
to hang up, I will ask him
if he wants my ears and I
repeat his tales in a poem
I wrote about him. I don't
ask him for his ears but he gives
them to me anyways and
he even plucks two eyeballs
from his face and he says,
 “My Olivia, you are a star.”
and I am flaring because my dad
is a supernova and I ask him
if he wants my eyes,
and even though they are
almond shaped like his,
he does not see,
he does not see.